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Report of the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session in February 2010 (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics on the action plan to implement the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and the process followed in its development.

A coherent capacity-building programme is proposed in the action plan for the development of an integrated agricultural statistical system at the national level. The action plan is articulated in a comprehensive technical assistance and training programme and a targeted research agenda. It includes a country assessment framework that will be used as a basis to evaluate the capacity of national agricultural statistical systems and to target the implementation strategy at the national level. The action plan contains a description of the governance framework, with coordinating structures at the global, regional and national levels, and the architecture of the financial flows. It also contains an outline of a comprehensive strategy for the mobilization of resources and technical support from developed countries, the donor community and the international organizations providing technical assistance.

The present report contains a description of the activities accomplished to date, including resource mobilization initiatives and partnership arrangements established with regional agencies, to take into account the different levels of statistical development in various regions, as well as to ensure ownership by regional institutions.

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Report of the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics

I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the present report is to update the Statistical Commission on the progress made in preparing the action plan to implement the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (hereinafter referred to as the action plan and the Global Strategy, respectively) and the key proposals it contains, including governance and funding mechanisms. The report contains a description of the activities accomplished to date for implementing the Global Strategy, such as resource mobilization initiatives and partnership arrangements established with regional organizations to develop regional plans, as well as work undertaken to develop methodological guidelines and assist countries.

2. The Commission at its forty-first session in February 2010 endorsed the technical content and strategic directions proposed in the Global Strategy. At the same time it urged the development of an implementation plan with country assessment, comprehensive technical assistance, training programmes and a well-targeted research agenda to support the implementation of the Global Strategy.

3. The Commission recognized that implementation of the Global Strategy would require the mobilization of resources and technical support from countries, the donor community and international organizations providing technical assistance.

4. Following the recommendations of the Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank, in close consultation with the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics[1] and a large number of national and international stakeholders, developed the action plan, which is a long-term programme of capacity development aimed at rebuilding a sustainable national agricultural statistical system. It follows a phased approach, with the first five-year phase starting in 2012 and extending over the longer term for up to 15 years.

5. The action plan is expected to lead to a substantial increase in:

(a) The number of countries with the capability to produce, analyse and disseminate the minimum set of core data proposed in the Global Strategy in order to meet current and emerging statistical demands of national and international stakeholders;

(b) The number of countries with a sustainable system for agricultural statistics through the coordination and integration of agriculture in national statistical systems;

(c) The number of people working on agricultural statistics that have appropriate skills as a result of training and technical assistance.

6. A progress report on the preparation of the action plan was presented by the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics at the forty-second session of the

[1] The Friends of the Chair Group on Agricultural Statistics is led by Brazil and includes among its members representatives of Australia, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and the United States of America. Eurostat and the World Bank participate as observers, while the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Statistics Division serve as its secretariat.

Commission in February 2011 (E/CN.3/2011/24). A side event attended by representatives from various countries, international and regional organizations and resource partners was also organized to discuss the Action Plan. The participants agreed with its main proposals, recommended that the specificities and needs of different regions be considered and urged that FAO establish as soon as possible a global trust fund and the global governance arrangements necessary to start implementing the Global Strategy. The present report builds on the previous progress report and extends it to include new developments.

II. Drafting and consultation process

7. The action plan was drafted following an inclusive process which involved extensive consultations with national and international statistical organizations, as well as with ministries of agriculture and other governmental organizations represented in FAO governing bodies.

8. An account of the consultations organized in 2009 and 2010 was provided in the above-mentioned progress report presented to the Commission in February 2011. The following new consultations organized over 2011 were fruitful:

(a) A joint high-level mission by FAO, the World Bank and the African Development Bank visited several resource partners in February and March 2011 to present the draft action plan and verify their interest in supporting it;

(b) In June 2011, the agricultural ministers of the Group of Twenty, in adopting the G20 Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture, made a statement in support of the Global Strategy and invited international organizations to create synergies between the Global Strategy and the Agricultural Marketing Information System;

(c) During the thirty-seventh session of the FAO Conference held in Rome from 25 June to 2 July 2011, the action plan received strong support from the ministers of agriculture of all FAO member countries and key partners;

(d) For peer review, a second draft of the action plan was developed and circulated in August 2011 to all national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture. At the same time, the draft was posted on a web page created by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics for wider consultation on the draft;

(e) The draft was also discussed at several expert group meetings, including: the Central Statistical Office of Poland Satellite Meeting on Building Statistical Capacity for a Better Future, held in Krakow, Poland, on 18 and 19 August 2011; the meeting of the Wye Group on Rural Statistics and Agricultural Household Income, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 9 to 11 November 2011; and the twenty-second session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics, in Addis Ababa, from 30 November to 3 December 2011;

(f) A successful meeting of FAO resource partners was held in Rome on 28 October 2011. The event was attended by more than 50 participants, including several potential donors and technical partners that provided strong support for the action plan and offered various ways of cooperating in its implementation. Moreover, several partners, including the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Bill and Melinda

Gates Foundation, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank and Italian Cooperation committed to provide funding for a proposed global trust fund.

9. The action plan takes into account all feedback received during the extensive consultation process and is available as a background document for the current session of the Statistical Commission.[2]

III. Global and regional plans

10. The action plan provides the overall framework for implementing the Global Strategy. It gives a broad description of activities that should be undertaken at the global, regional and country levels in a consistent and complementary manner. The action plan contains descriptions of: the technical components on which the capacity development programme is based; the governance arrangements that will steer and monitor the implementation of the action plan; the implementation strategy for the selection of priority countries; and the resource mobilization strategy and funding arrangements to raise the resources necessary for its implementation.

11. The action plan will be complemented by more specific regional plans which will take into account the institutional arrangement, the statistical capacity of different regions and the characteristics of the agricultural sector in the region concerned. The regional plans will be developed by regional organizations with FAO support. They will build on the guidance contained in the action plan to elaborate specific technical assistance and training programmes tailored to regional needs for capacity development. They will also specify the responsibilities of the institutions that will lead the implementation of the regional plans and describe the governance arrangements that will ensure proper decision-making and monitoring processes. In accordance with the priorities of the countries in the region, the regional plans will be developed in a harmonized way following the technical content and strategic directions recommended by the Global Strategy.

IV. Technical content of the action plan

12. The action plan includes a comprehensive framework for assessing the technical and operational capacity of countries, a technical assistance component, a training component and a research component. These components have been integrated into a logical framework to ensure that the activities of research, training and technical assistance are integrated and sequenced in a way that ensures that the results of one component will feed into the others.

(a) **Country assessment**. Country assessments will form the basis for implementation of the Global Strategy. They will also provide a baseline against which progress can be measured. Country assessments will be carried out in two stages and will determine the ability of countries to produce the minimum set of core data and the critical constraints in the country's statistical system. The first stage will be carried out in all countries using a standardized questionnaire and will

[2] See http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/ess/documents/meetings_and_workshops/Resource_Partners_Oct2011/Global_Strategy_Action_Plan_R4_11.doc, "Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development: An Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy").

establish baseline information on national statistical capacity. The results of the first stage assessment will be used at the regional level to group countries according to the level of their statistical development and the typology of their data quality problems. The use of a core standard questionnaire, agreed with key partners, will ensure greater comparability of the assessments, thus enabling the donor community to better coordinate their support efforts. At the same time, the questionnaire can be adjusted to meet needs specific to particular regions. The information generated will also serve as a basis for a more in-depth second stage assessment in selected countries which will be used in preparing country proposals. Such assessment, which also takes into account ongoing related technical cooperation activities in the country, goes beyond existing assessments, which often do not provide a sufficient focus on agriculture and its integration within the national statistical system.

(b) **Technical assistance plan**. Technical assistance activities have two components. The first involves the development and documentation of statistical standards and technical guidelines for all aspects of the agricultural statistics system. This will be based on the new methodologies and technologies developed under the research plan. The documentation of technical standards will serve as the basis for the assistance furnished to countries. The second component involves the delivery to countries of technical assistance for capacity development. Regional institutions will lead such work. Technical assistance activities will also be coordinated with existing statistical capacity-building initiatives to expand the scope of these efforts and link them to agricultural statistics. Other important aspects include mainstreaming agriculture into national statistical systems and strengthening governance mechanisms at the country level.

(c) **Training plan**. Training curricula will be designed and training materials will be prepared, including e-learning courses, and theoretical and practical knowledge requirements will be defined for different levels of core skills needed to produce basic official statistics. These activities will be carried out at the global level. At the regional level, the main activities will be to assess countries' training needs, train trainers and support the use of e-learning for on-the-job training. Direct training on specific topics will be provided in national and regional training centres. Regional offices will provide support to strengthen the capabilities of selected training centres and will promote access to training by national agricultural statisticians. Countries will contribute to the identification of their training needs, organize in-service training, ensure access to e-learning materials and select staff for different training opportunities. As an outcome of the training component activities, more staff will be able to produce, analyse and disseminate agricultural and rural data as required by the Global Strategy. Staff will be trained in core statistical skills and competencies, which are still seriously lacking in many developing countries, as well as in specialized methods and tools in various areas, such as integrated survey design and management, use of remote sensing and global positioning system (GPS) tools for agricultural data collection, food security statistics and market information systems. Special attention will be paid to strengthening the capacity of regional training centres by equipping them with standard courses, curricula, materials and facilities, as well as upgrading their training infrastructure, including providing them with computer hardware and software, audio-visual equipment and associated items.

(d) **Research plan**. The purpose of the research plan is to develop and disseminate advanced and cost-effective methodologies, tools and standards which

will be adopted by national statistical agencies for the efficient production of reliable agricultural statistics. The research activities on priority topics will be conducted by the most qualified regional and international institutions and will be coordinated at the global level to ensure synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. The Statistics Division of FAO will also undertake methodological developments in those fields in which it has a comparative advantage. Through a wide consultative process, including a survey of key stakeholders in agricultural statistics and various meetings, priority research topics have been identified based on relevance to developing countries. The proposal was then validated through various international forums, including the Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics, the fifty-sixth session of the International Statistical Institute and a technical meeting with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

V. Governance structure

13. The proposed governance structure is based on the successful experience of the International Comparison Programme. The establishment of governance arrangements at global, regional and national levels is recommended to steer and monitor the implementation of the Action Plan. In order to avoid as much as possible the creation of new structures, it makes use of existing institutions or coordination mechanisms. The key elements of the proposed governance structure are described below.

Global level

14. **Global steering committee**. The global steering committee, which will be the ultimate decision-making body, will furnish strategic guidance and oversight for implementation of the Global Strategy. It will be composed of representatives of FAO, resource partners, country representatives of the regional steering committees, the chair of the Statistical Commission, regional participating partners[3] and other leading international organizations involved in agricultural and rural statistics.

15. The committee will meet at least once a year to determine the allocation of funds for global, regional and country-level activities and for different regions. It will approve proposed annual workplans and progress reports. Other tasks will be to ensure overall coordination, monitor progress in the implementation of the action plan and support resource mobilization. The committee will also appoint the members of the global executive board.

16. **Global executive board**. The global executive board, a subgroup of the committee from which it will receive delegated authority to oversee the execution of decisions, will meet at least three times a year, where possible in connection with suitable international meetings. It will also carry out functions of the committee in the interim between annual meetings of the committee, providing in particular policy direction for global activities for implementation of the Action Plan.

17. **Global office**. Based in the FAO Statistics Division in Rome and led by the global coordinator, this office will ensure overall technical coordination of the implementation of the Global Strategy at the global level and within regions. It will

[3] Participating partners are agencies in charge of implementing components of the action plan at global or regional levels.

act as secretariat of the committee, providing recommendations on indicative allocation of funds among activities at the global, regional and country levels and between regions. The FAO Statistics Division is the participating partner tasked with normative and technical coordination work, establishing standards and providing centralized technical and practical guidance on cross-regional issues.

18. For that office, the FAO Statistics Division will recruit staff with proven experience in the coordination of global statistical capacity development programmes and high-level technical expertise in agricultural and rural statistics.

Regional level

19. **Regional steering committee**. The regional steering committee will be the decision-making body at the regional level and will provide guidance and oversight for implementation of the regional and country activities defined in the regional plan. It will assess country proposals and prioritize the use of funds among countries.

20. Its composition will typically include representatives of countries, resource partners, regional participating partners, FAO and selected experts.

21. **Regional executive board**. The regional executive board, a subgroup of the regional steering committee from which it will receive delegated authority to oversee the execution of decisions, will meet at least three times a year, where possible in conjunction with suitable regional or international meetings. It will carry out the committee's functions in the interim between annual meetings of that committee. In particular, it will provide policy direction for the implementation of regional plans.

22. **Regional office**. The regional office will serve as secretariat of the regional steering committee and will be located in one of the implementing organizations tasked with the coordination of regional activities.

VI. Resource mobilization

23. A comprehensive yet flexible resource mobilization strategy has been developed and is being implemented for effective implementation of the Global Strategy. It includes an intensive communication campaign advocating implementation of the Global Strategy and the importance of sound national agricultural statistical systems for the formulation of effective policies on food, agriculture and rural development. The campaign involved several high-level visits to key donor agencies, presentation of the Global Strategy at various forums, preparation and wide dissemination of leaflets and creation of a dedicated web page.

24. The communication campaign culminated with a successful resource partners meeting organized at FAO headquarters in Rome on 28 October 2011. The meeting was attended by more than 50 participants from all regions of the world. The meeting endorsed the action plan and made suggestions for its effective implementation and wider dissemination. During that meeting, several partners clearly indicated their intention to support the implementation of the Global Strategy. In particular, the financial support expected from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Department for International Development, Italian Cooperation, the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank will

cover about 50 per cent of the total budget for the first five years of implementation of the Action Plan. A global trust fund has been created and initial funds are being received. This effort will continue in order to secure the remaining funds needed for full implementation of the Global Strategy.

25. In addition to financial support through contributions to the global trust fund, several other modalities can be used to support implementation of the Global Strategy. The following modalities are foreseen:

(a) **Bilateral agreements between resource partners and countries**: A resource or technical partner may provide a country with direct support to implement the capacity-building activities included in the Global Strategy and/or data collection activities. These activities can also be conducted jointly with FAO or other institutions. An example of such a joint activity is the plan by FAO and the United States Department of Agriculture to work together in Bangladesh and Tanzania to start the implementation of the Global Strategy;

(b) **Bilateral agreement between resource partners and FAO**: With funding provided by some resource partners, such as the European Union, FAO is providing technical support for data collection activities, such as agricultural censuses in several countries. These projects will be aligned with the Global Strategy;

(c) **South-South cooperation agreements**: More advanced developing countries may directly support other developing countries to implement recommendations of the Global Strategy. Countries such as Brazil and Mexico have indicated their interest in providing such support;

(d) **Regular programme resources of FAO**: Through its technical cooperation programme funds, FAO also provides several countries with technical assistance for preparatory activities for undertaking censuses of agriculture. These projects will also be aligned with the Global Strategy.

26. All these modalities of support for countries should contribute to expanding country coverage of the Global Strategy, focusing interventions on the key elements agreed and ensuring complementarities between actions from various partners.

VII. Implementation strategy

27. A phased and modular approach will be adopted for implementation of the Global Strategy. The Action Plan will target 90 countries worldwide (40 countries in Africa and 50 countries in other regions) to be covered during the first five-year phase. The activities will be started in a small number of pilot countries (about 20 countries) and will be gradually expanded to more countries as lessons are learned and more resources are made available. However, global public goods developed by the Action Plan, such as methodological guidelines, will be made available to all countries by developing a knowledge-based dissemination platform. For countries which have already reached an adequate level of statistical capacity, this may be enough to meet the three pillars of the Global Strategy.

28. In order to ensure that the implementation of the action plan is driven by countries and addresses identified gaps, country assessments will be conducted in two stages, as previously described. The outcome will be country proposals to be

submitted for funding, which are tailored to address priority needs at the country level, are agreed by all stakeholders and take into account ongoing assistance being received by the country concerned.

29. The regional offices will provide countries with technical support for conducting in-depth assessments, identifying their priority assistance needs and preparing country proposals for funding.

30. In each region, the selection of priority countries for implementation of the Action Plan will be under the responsibility of the regional steering committee.

31. In order to ensure successful implementation and the conditions needed for sustainability, the following criteria will be applied in order to select the priority countries:

(a) Political will and commitment to improve agricultural statistics, as demonstrated by the contributions of Governments in cash or kind;

(b) Existence of active donor interest to provide support for implementation of country activities;

(c) Possible complementarities with relevant ongoing planning activities, such as the national strategies for the development of statistics[4] process, which would facilitate the integration of agricultural statistics into the national statistical system;

(d) Complementarities with other relevant ongoing or planned large-scale statistical activities, such as population censuses, agricultural censuses, or household surveys, which could serve as the foundation of the statistical system and offer cost-effective solutions in the selection of the most appropriate methodology;

(e) Level of statistical development.

32. In selecting target countries, priority will be given to countries in which agriculture is important to the economy and which contributes significantly to global food production. However, the list of priority countries must also include countries at different levels of statistical development to ensure that some results will have been obtained in the first phases of implementation of the action plan. All remaining countries will benefit from the activities undertaken to produce public goods at the regional and global levels, such as methodological guidelines and training materials.

33. Country proposals will be implemented within broader statistical capacity development programmes, such as the national strategies for the development of statistics. A bottom-up approach for the production of such strategies will be promoted, with the development of sector strategic plans for agricultural and rural

[4] The national strategy for the development of statistics is a comprehensive and coherent framework to facilitate the development of statistics across sectors. A well-designed strategy addresses data limitations, mobilizes and prioritizes the use of resources for statistics, integrates statistics within national policy, planning and budget processes as well as into sector strategies to generate performance indicators for programme-based budgeting, such as agriculture, health, education, justice and security, water and environment, and looks across the whole national statistical system while providing a coherent framework for all national and international statistical programmes and for donor support for those programmes, provides an action plan for statistical capacity-building and acts as a catalyst for change.

statistics, which will serve as a building block necessary to ensure the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system. However, activities to deliver core data items and develop capacity will take place in parallel with the preparation of broader programmes and strategies in order to achieve immediate results.

34. Implementation will therefore strive to balance the need for achieving rapid results in the production and dissemination of core agricultural data of good quality with the need to develop sustained capacity over a longer period of time within a structured programme.

35. At the global level, the roll-out of the action plan will begin with establishing the global steering committee, setting up the global trust fund and creating the global office at FAO, the responsibilities of which were previously described.

VIII. Status of implementation

36. A standard questionnaire and guidelines for the first stage country assessment have been developed in consultation with key national and international institutions, and country assessments are already under way in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. The guidelines for analysing the questionnaires and for grouping the countries, as well as the guidelines for in-depth country assessment, are being developed. Moreover, many activities in line with the Global Strategy are already being carried out at the global, regional and country levels, in particular the following:

(a) FAO and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century are working together to prepare guidelines for mainstreaming agriculture into national strategies for the development of statistics and piloting them in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Peru and Mozambique;

(b) FAO and the United Nations Population Fund have completed guidelines for linking agricultural and population and housing censuses. Workshops for implementing the guidelines are being organized in the Pacific, Northern Africa and the Middle East, and francophone Africa;

(c) FAO is also working with the Living Standards Measurement Study group of the World Bank for improving the measurement of agricultural productivity and food consumption in surveys in six sub-Saharan countries;

(d) With technical support furnished by FAO, Ethiopia is using remote sensing and GPS data for developing an area frame as the basis for its annual agricultural surveys;

(e) GPS and computer assisted personal interviews were successfully used in conducting an agricultural census in Mozambique, with the preliminary results having been made available in fewer than six months. Personal digital assistants and GPS were also successfully used in the Brazilian agricultural census. These experiences are being expanded to more countries;

(f) Remote sensing is being used as a cost-effective method for crop monitoring and forecasting in Pakistan, with the support of FAO, the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Maryland;

(g) The web-based CountrySTAT information technology system, which was developed by FAO to improve the quality and online access to national agricultural

data, has been successfully adopted in 2 Asian and 17 sub-Saharan African countries. It is now being expanded for use in more countries and subregional organizations (East African Community and West African Economic and Monetary Union);

(h) FAO is working with several partners to develop a satellite account for agriculture of the revised system of environmental economic accounting, which will serve as the overarching conceptual framework of the Global Strategy.

IX. Development of regional plans

37. As explained above, a regional approach has been adopted to take account of the different level of statistical development between regions and to ensure ownership by regional institutions.

38. **Africa**. The Regional Plan for Africa was developed by the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and FAO. The Regional Steering Committee for Africa, which met for the first time in July 2011 to discuss implementation arrangements for that Plan, includes both users and producers of statistics, under the high-level stewardship of the chief economist/vice-president of the African Development Bank as chair. The executive board has also been established and its members identified.

39. The African Development Bank and ECA are the participating partners for regional technical assistance and training activities, respectively, while FAO is responsible for adapting the global research agenda to the specific needs of the African region. The regional office is being set up in the African Development Bank. Some country assessments are already under way.

40. **Asia and the Pacific**. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics established a subgroup on agricultural statistics under the steering group for the regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific in order to lead the preparation of the regional Action Plan. The first meeting of the steering group, held in Manila from 21 to 23 November 2011, committed to prepare the first draft of the regional plan by April 2012. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP and the Asian Development Bank have set up a joint secretariat to steer the preparation of the regional plan, with specific responsibilities for technical assistance, training and research, respectively. The standard questionnaire for country assessments has been sent to all countries in the Asian and Pacific region and results should be available by the end of January 2012.

41. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community will be a key partner institution for implementation of the Action Plan in the Pacific. Important synergies have been identified between the Global Strategy and the 10-year Pacific statistics strategy 2011-2020. In particular, joint work will be undertaken for implementation of the guidelines for linking agricultural and population and housing censuses, the integration of an agricultural module in the questionnaire used for household expenditure surveys and the mainstreaming of agriculture into the national strategies for the development of statistics.

42. **Latin America and the Caribbean**. The sixth session of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, which was organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the Dominican Republic from 16 to

18 November 2011, decided to establish the Working Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean and tasked it with the development of the regional plan and its implementation. Brazil is the coordinator of the working group and its members are Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. ECLAC, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development have also expressed interest in participating.

43. **Other regions**. Several activities have also been undertaken in close collaboration with the regional offices of FAO to involve other regional partners, including the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Islamic Development Bank and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States for Central Asia and the Caucasus.

X. Next steps

44. Governance structures are being established at the global and regional levels (global steering committee, global offices, the regional steering committees and regional offices for Africa, and Asia and Pacific) and should have become functional at the beginning of 2012. A technical advisory committee will also be constituted to provide technical inputs for implementation of the Global Strategy. The establishment of the global trust fund and the operationalization of the governance structures will accelerate the implementation of activities at the national, regional and global levels. Country assessment work is ongoing in the African and Asian regions under the leadership of regional organizations (Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, ESCAP and FAO regional statisticians for Africa and Asia). This work will continue in other regions and lead to the selection of the first group of 20 countries in which implementation of the Global Strategy will start in 2012. FAO and the United States Department of Agriculture have already begun to implement some activities in a few of these countries. The number of countries will be gradually increased as more funding or technical support is made available.

45. Next steps also include collaborating with regional organizations that can take a leadership role in the development of regional plans and move forward in mobilizing resources. The development of methodological guidelines will continue.[5]

46. With the finalization of the action plan to implement the Global Strategy, the Friends of the Chair group on Agricultural Statistics has completed its work. It is proposed that an inter-agency and expert group on agricultural and rural statistics be established as a new mechanism to develop and document good practices and guidelines on concepts, methods and statistical standards for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. In this regard, such an inter-agency and expert group would replace the Wye City Group on Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income by expanding its mandate to cover the entire range of indicators on rural development. It would ensure coordination and integration with existing international statistical standards on related statistical domains. The new group would also provide guidance on requests to the global steering committee and the global office in implementation of the Action Plan.

[5] The priorities for those guidelines are identified in the list of "quick wins" presented in annex 7 of the action plan.

47. The proposed inter-agency and expert group on agricultural and rural statistics would comprise high-level experts in statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development; they would come from national Governments and international organizations. The group would report regularly to the Statistical Commission on the progress made in its activities.

XI. Points for discussion

48. **The Commission is invited to:**

(a) **Endorse the action plan to implement the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and its governance arrangements;**

(b) **Express its support and provide guidance on the establishment of an inter-agency and expert group on agricultural and rural statistics and its terms of reference.**

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Report of the Wye Group on statistics on rural development and agriculture household income

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Wye Group on statistics on rural development and agriculture household income. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the report of the Wye Group and, in doing so, to recognize the Group's work on the second edition of its Handbook, entitled *Wye Group Handbook: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income*.

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Report of the Wye Group on statistics on rural development and agriculture household income

1. The Wye Group on statistics on rural development and agriculture household income was established by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth session, held from 27 February to 2 March 2007, following the completion by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Agriculture and Rural Indicators of the Handbook entitled *Rural Households' Livelihood and Well-Being: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income*.[1]

2. The Wye Group has successfully completed the outputs listed in its terms of reference, namely, the revision of the 2005 Handbook and the publication of the proceedings from the annual meetings focused on debating the implementation of consistent methods for rural data collection and their use in policy analysis.

3. These outputs support the objectives under the mandate of the Commission, namely: to support the adoption of consistent and comparable methods of data collection across countries; focus on the application and value of data standards in developing countries; assess and explore the potential for improved statistics for policy indicators and in empirical analysis; and determine the need to change or update the Handbook, and carry out the revision.

4. At the second meeting of the Wye Group, a decision was taken to update the Handbook in such a way as to reflect practices in non-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries at different levels of development. The Group has been working over the last four years on updating the Handbook, by expanding its scope to include applications to developing countries. The revision will be published only in electronic form. The work taken to update the Handbook has been completed and the institutional home of the Handbook will be the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Handbook will be hosted on the FAO website by early 2012. The host will also manage the third-party links in the Handbook and any updating of the Handbook as is deemed necessary, together with an advisory group and referees. Members of the Wye Group have proposed that dissemination activities include:

(a) Submission of individual elements of the Handbook to Wikipedia in order to influence common knowledge;

(b) Inclusion on the host website of a facility for comments and a counter for visits and downloads.

5. The second edition of the Handbook is entitled *Wye Group Handbook: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income*, second edition. The Handbook provides a comprehensive compendium of basic concepts and standards in statistics on rural development and agricultural household income, building from a base characterized by little common knowledge or agreement. It provides a perspective on the most important concepts in the area and the main questions that need to be considered by countries when adopting related concepts or measures. Part one, on rural development statistics, focuses attention on the main objectives of rural development policy, and provides conceptual frameworks and inventories for rural classification, rural development statistics, indicators and data

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.II.E.14.

sources. Part two offers a conceptual framework for farm household income, wealth and well-being and provides a comprehensive picture of the various definitions of the agricultural household, income distribution and well-being, and farm household wealth and income and related measures.

6. The Handbook is structured around a series of core items which provide key information on the topics. The core text is hyperlinked to case studies which are examined in greater detail. Further information is offered through links to further readings, references and primary data sources. The complete table of contents of the Handbook is provided in a background document.

7. The fourth annual meeting of the Wye Group was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 9 to 11 November 2011, for the purpose of presenting the Handbook and discussing the future of the Wye Group in relation to the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Additional outcomes of the meeting were to support the Global Strategy by highlighting emerging needs in rural statistics for countries at different levels of development; to share good practices and identify possible uses of new tools in rural statistics in countries at different stages of development; and to explore uses of improved statistics for policy and empirical analysis. The conference was hosted by the Institute of Geography and Statistics of Brazil and co-organized with FAO. The meeting was well attended, with over 80 participants from international organizations, national statistical offices, policy institutions and universities. In total, 18 countries and 30 organizations (including several from developing countries) were represented.

8. The sessions highlighted work relevant to the topics of the Handbook and the relationship between the work of the Wye Group and the Global Strategy, including in Latin America. Key themes covered were the role of statistics in supporting sustainable agricultural and rural development; measures of well-being; climate change and agriculture; gender-disaggregated rural statistics; use of rural statistics in Latin America; and reconciling different data-collection instruments and innovative methodologies. A complete overview of the meeting and sessions is available in a background document.

9. Common findings across sessions encompassed the need to be realistic in developing a system of statistical data collection by focusing on the core data items required by policymakers and on the production of timely data. In this regard, the potential of new technologies, such as the Global Positioning System for plot-area measurement, satellite imagery and cloud computing, to provide statistical data quickly and at a low cost, was highlighted. Methods proposed should be realistic, so as to be commensurate with the capacity available in countries. For example, where no other systems are available, use of satellite imagery and geo-referenced administrative areas could quickly provide a basis for developing the sample frame. In other cases, statistical systems could better make use of other available data sources, such as those for administrative data, to provide the most cost-effective and timely data.

10. Several sessions presented the results of analysis of agricultural and rural development. The papers focused on a wide range of topics including measurement of poverty trends, food security, tools for protecting rural households in support of climate change adaption, the role of gender in agricultural productivity and improving market opportunities for farmers. The wide range of means of data collection available and the interesting findings notwithstanding, many of the

presentations chose to highlight the difficulties inherent in using existing data sources owing to lack of information relating to both households and agriculture, difficulties associated with the concepts used and lack of a consistent source of data over time. This foregrounded the continuing gap in respect of the availability of accurate statistical data that use common definitions and concepts over time for research and policy needs of agricultural and rural development.

11. The final session of the meeting discussed options for the future of the Wye Group. The Wye Group has completed the outputs listed in its terms of reference and this being the case, it has been proposed that the activities of the Group be closed. The session highlighted the fact that, in the course of its work, the Wye Group has provided a regular forum for the discussion of rural and agricultural statistics where none had previously existed. The Group has been unique in its multidisciplinarity, featuring participants from official statistics, research institutions, policy bodies and both developing and developed countries. This coming together of producers and users has been particularly useful in highlighting core data needs and in enabling users to understand the challenges of data collection.

12. The discussion on the future of the Wye Group highlighted the importance of the close links between the material in the Handbook and the pillars of the Global Strategy, particularly as regards the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system; the need to have strong country involvement; the importance of linking agricultural statistics and rural development; the need to help countries apply statistics on agricultural and rural development; the need for flexibility with respect to incorporating emerging issues; and the benefits of an interdisciplinary forum. In this regard, it was proposed that elements of the Wye Group be incorporated into the proposed inter-agency and expert group on agricultural and rural statistics, as described in the terms of reference of the Group, and that mechanisms for obtaining feedback and ensuring periodic updating of the Handbook also be included. Further proposals in respect of the inter-agency group will be presented under the discussion item concerning the review of the Action Plan to Implement the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

13. The Commission is invited to take note of the report of the Wye Group and in doing so, to recognize the work of the Group on the second edition of the Handbook entitled *Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income*.